

**ACTION: COMMUNITY EE  
NETWORK PILOT PROGRAM**

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**Recommendation**

- That the Kentucky Environmental Education Council allocate approximately \$35,000 through the end of Fiscal Year 2022 for a community environmental education grant program focused on establishing or supporting Community Environmental Education Networks.

**Rationale**

The initiative includes two pilot test initiatives that will facilitate development of a county level community environmental education network in Clark County and in Warren County. It is anticipated that each pilot will last 18 months. The approximate cost for the initial six months would be \$5850.00 for each network. If the results of the first six months are deemed successful and the Council elects to continue for another year, the approximate cost would be an additional \$10,000 per network.

Each pilot test county network will produce a manual outlining the way that counties can organize a network of collaborating environmental education providers that can be replicated across the commonwealth in the future. The pilot projects will enable us to test the feasibility of equipping communities to increase the environmental literacy of the citizens by bringing together a wide range of organizational types, including industry, formal and nonformal educators, and environmental interest groups.

We propose that the most efficient tool to jump start the grant program is a 6-month MOA with a 501 (c) 3 organization in the Clark and Warren County networks. MOAs, according to the *Finance and Administration Cabinet Office of Procurement Services Personal Service Contract and Memorandum of Agreement Contracting Manual*, are used to establish a contract with a public entity or a non-profit 501(c) 3 corporation. MOA's do not have to go through a competitive process.

The MOA would begin January 2020 with an option to renew (if both parties agree) in the next biennium for an additional 12 months. For a total of 18 months for the pilot period. The MOA will allow sufficient time for the pilot test counties to acquire a source of funds to become self-sustaining and give us adequate time to assess the success of this model for community environmental education networks in other counties that could be funded through a competitive process in the future if budgeting permits.

The reason for choosing Clark County and Warren County is that each county already has an established group in the incipient phase of organizing into a formal network. In Clark County the group was initially started by an AmeriCorps member during service at Legacy Grove Park. Members include businesses, industry, environmental non profits & interest groups as well as educators. The Warren County group's membership is comprised of a similar makeup. There are currently three, 501 (c) 3 organizations in the existing Clark County group as well as 3-5 within the Warren County group. It will be up to each network to determine which nonprofit will have the opportunity to act as the fiscal agent for this MOA.

The choice of these two groups conforms with the recommendations from the US Cabinet for Health and Human Services publication, *Tips and Recommendations for Successfully Pilot Testing Your Program A Guide for the Office of Adolescent Health and Administration on Children, Youth and Families Grantees*, which states

**“Before you begin a pilot test, consider whether you have completed the following steps”**

- Engage a working group of community partners who are invested in your project and will meet regularly to discuss your progress, will provide input on the activities and will champion your program in the community.
- They have assessed your community's needs and assets (who are they, how do they behave, what other positive influences and negative influences might exist in their environment/community? What services or programs currently exist, and what gaps are there in the current services or programs?).
- Selected a pilot test group, which may be at one of the sites where you have arranged to implement the full program or with a community partner organization with whom you have an existing Memorandum of Understanding (MOU).
- <https://www.hhs.gov/ash/oah/sites/default/files/pilot-testing-508.pdf>

As stated earlier, the deliverables from this process ultimately is to develop a replicable model supported by tangible resources to guide formation of additional environmental education networks. Other deliverables include:

- a. A manual for organizing environmental education coalitions at the county level across the state which includes:
  - A copy of a needs assessment or other tool to identify the environmental education needs of the residents within the county and/or identify the organizations that are currently providing EE to the public.
  - Instructions for analyzing the data from the needs survey
  - Step by step instructions on the development and administration of a countywide coalition of environmental education providers that can be replicated in other counties across the Commonwealth

- A checklist of steps that lead to the establishment of an environmental education coalition at the county level
- b. The agreement will also require the network
- To join KAEE as an organizational member so they can utilize the resources on their website to promote EE events in their perspective counties
  - Maintain an online presence
  - Engage up to four of the network members in environmental education professional development for community leaders as recommended by the staff of KEEC
  - Report quarterly on progress
  - Find funding to continue after the initial 18-month pilot test.

If this proves to be successful we will have the tools that will allow us to take this model develop training materials for, and if the agency budget allows, fund other counties across the commonwealth. This directly relates to the council's mandate found in KRS 157.900 "The General Assembly hereby declares that maintaining a clean and healthy environment is a state priority and is the individual and collective responsibility of all citizens of Kentucky. It is, therefore, in the public interest that a comprehensive environmental education initiative be undertaken to promote an informed and knowledgeable citizenry with the skills and attributes necessary to effectively and constructively solve existing environmental problems, prevent new ones, and maintain a balanced and economically healthy environment for future generations." As well as KRS 157.915 (7) "Monitor and report periodically on environmental literacy in Kentucky and continually assess trends and needs in environmental education on a local, state, national, and global basis" and (8) "Make recommendations and seek changes through regulations, legislation, and other means to promote environmental literacy in Kentucky."